being undertaken through private funding;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) when the work on gauge conversion of Dharangradhra Kuda will be taken up and what time will be taken in its completion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Dharangradhra-Kuda line is being converted on cost-sharing basis between Railway, Ministry of Industry and State Govt. Railway has provided its full share of funds in 1998-99 budget. Work will be started as soon as co-sharers comeforth with their share of funds.

Harassment of Reservation Ticket Holders

1179. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the railway reservations are rapidly becoming meaningless inasmuch as the passengers without reservation come and occupy the reserved seats and even after repeated entreaties refuse to vacate them causing great harassment to those having reservation tickets; and

(b) if so, whether Government will issue strict instructions to the conductors attached to the reserved bogies to stop, if necessary with police help, the non-reservation ticket holders from entering into such bogies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Some instances of entering of unauthorised passengers in reserved coaches and occupying the reserved berths of the bonafide passengers have come to notice during busy seasons like summer rush, Pooja holidays etc.

(b) Instructions already exist and have since been reiterated further to the railways to conduct surprise checks with the help of GRP/RPF and the persons found travelling unauthorisedly be dealt with under the provisions of Railways Act, 1989.

Operation of Rajdhani Express to Thiruvananthapuram by Delhi staff

1180. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Rajdhani Express to Thiruvananthapuram is operating by the staff from Delhi;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the reasons for not allowing the staff from Thiruvananthapuram Division to operate one of the Rajdhani Expresses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) In order to ensure uniformity, Rajdhani Express trains are manned by the staff of the railway which is responsible for the primary maintenance of the train and Northern Railway being such railway, in this case, its staff man this train.

Complaints About Ageing Coaches

1181. SHRIMATI CHANDRAKALA PANDEY:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of complaints from passengers in Eastern, South Eastern and North East Frontier Railways about the use of ageing coaches without requisite amenities;

(b) if so, the action plan to replace these coaches, zone-wise; and

(c) if not, the comparative statistics of the average age of coaches in all the zones of Indian Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No overaged coaches are used in trains running in Eastern, North East Frontier and South Eastern Railways and it is Railways' constant endeavour to provide all amenity fittings in good working condition on coaches before commencement of the journey. In fact, as a result of various measures taken by Railways, passenger complaints relating to upkeep of coaches have reduced significantly over the last two years.

(b) Question does not arise. However, replacement of overaged coaches which are used in other application than passenger trains is a continuous process and new coaches are being added to the fleet every year.

(c) Average age of passenger coaches zonewise is as under:—

(Data as on 31.3.1997)

Railway	Average age
Central	11 yrs.
Eastern	9 yrs.
Northern	9 yrs.
North Eastern	9 yrs.
Northeast Frontier	10 yrs.
Southern	10 yrs.
South Central	11 yrs.
South Eastern	9 yrs.
Western	11 yrs.

Construction of Sambalpur-Talcher Railway line

1182. SHRI NARENDRA PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated cost and the time limit for the construction of the Sambalpur-Talcher Railway Line;

(b) whether there has been delay in completing the project; and

(c) if so, the revised estimate of the project and by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) The estimated cost of Talchar-Sambalpur line is Rs. 336.68 crores. The line was targetted to be completed in Dec. 95 but was delayed due to constraint of resources. The present anticipated cost is Rs. 360 crores and the expected date of completion is 30-6-98.

Sale of Railway Tickets at a Premium During the Holiday Season

1183. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during holiday season, railway tickets are sold at a premium by some agents in collaboration with railway employees;

(b) what action Railways have taken against such agents and railway employees;

(c) whether it is a fact that vigilance branch of the Railways is inactive in detecting such incidents; and

(d) whether any action has been taken in this regard; if so, the details of the total financial recovery and confiscation of tickets, zone-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Some cases of unscrupulous elements indulging in malpractices in reservation have come to notice.

(b) to (d) To curb such activities, regular preventive/decoy checks are conducted by the Vigilance and Commercial Organisation of the railways in coordination with RPF/GRP. In 1997-98, 4808 persons were apprehended and were dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Railway Act, 1989. Action was also taken against 646 defaulting staff. The number of transferred ticket cases detected and amount realised